

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

12-154

Orleans

EAS.1321,
1322

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



Address: 280 Schoolhouse Road

Historic Name: William and Amy Cobb House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1925

Source: Deed and mortgage records

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Unknown

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

2nd cottage (1910 Assessor photo, EAS.1322, Photo 4, 5)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

None on record

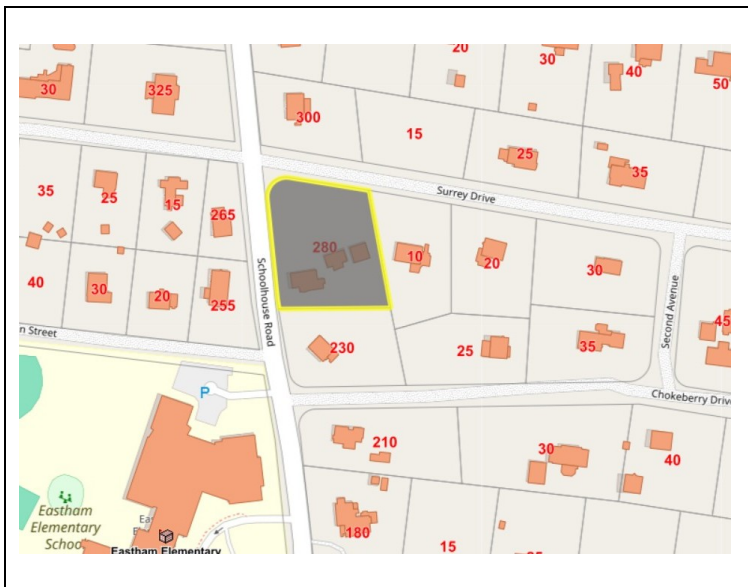
Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.69 acres

Setting: This parcel is located on the east side of Schoolhouse Road, just north of Eastham Elementary School. The surrounding area includes modest early- to late-20th century houses on small lots. The house is centered on its level parcel, and it is partially obscured from view by mature evergreen trees and a stockade fence. A gravel driveway leads to a parking area south of the house.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

280 SCHOOLHOUSE ROAD

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The core of the William and Amy Cobb House, built in 1925, is the 1½-story, gable-roofed block. There was likely an open porch on the front elevation that is now enclosed. The one-story ells on both side elevations may have also begun as porches. There are broad shed dormers on both roof slopes. The house is clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles and has projecting open eaves (a common feature of early-20th century cottages). A narrow brick chimney rises from the main roof ridge. Fenestration includes modern casement windows and 2/2 windows on the second story.

The second cottage has an unusually broad footprint with a low-pitched gable roof (Photo 4). It may have begun as a garage or outbuilding.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

The main house on this property has an Assessor date of 1921, and the smaller cottage has an Assessor date of 1910. If these Assessor dates are accurate, then they were both moved here. This property was part of a 6 ½-acre parcel sold by Freeman A. and Ellen G. Cobb of Wilmington, DE in August 1925 to Freeman's brother and sister-in-law, William C. and Amy (Clark) Cobb of Eastham.¹ Unlike subsequent deeds, this deed does not mention buildings. In July of 1926, William Cobb took out a mortgage with the Wellfleet Savings Bank and that deed referenced buildings, which could mean he built one of the houses (or perhaps both) soon after buying the land. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) began conducting aerial photographic surveys of Cape Cod in 1938. In that first survey, both the main house and cottage are shown (Photo 6).

William Chipman Cobb (1877-1952) was listed as a farmer in the 1930 census, and a laborer in the 1940 census. They appear to have fallen on hard times, likely a consequence of the Great Depression. Their mortgage was taken over by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1934.² The Home Owners' Loan Corporation was established in 1933 as part of the New Deal. Its purpose was to refinance home mortgages that were in default to prevent foreclosure. Unfortunately, in this case, they did lose the house through foreclosure.

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 395/ Page 125.

² Book 503/ Page 236.

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In 1943, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation sold this property, still 6 ½ acres, to Joseph R. and Mildred Florence Whiting of Bristol, CT.³ Joseph Robert Whiting (1908-1988) married Mildred F. Paine in Woods Hole in 1932. By 1940, they were living on Old Orchard Road in Eastham, and he was working as a laborer. By 1950, they were living here on Schoolhouse Road, and he was listed as a house carpenter. He was active in local real estate, buying numerous lots from the adjacent 1873 Eastham Land Company subdivision plan. They sold this house in 1971,⁴ and the house has changed hands five times since then. Most recently, it was sold in 2004 by Brooke A. and Peter P. Smuts of Eastham (formerly Northampton, MA) to a realty trust established by Kenneth W. Taber of Eastham.⁵

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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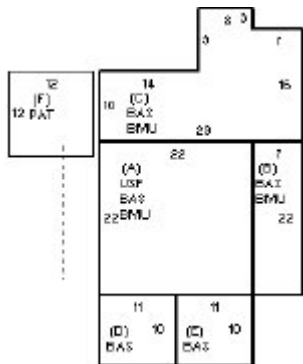


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View looking northeast (2004 Assessor photo).

³ Book 607/ Page 399.

⁴ Book 1560/ Page 202.

⁵ Book 18176/ Page 283.

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Photo 3. View looking southeast (2012 Assessor photo).



Photo 4. View of 2nd cottage, looking southeast (2019 Assessor photo).



Photo 5. View of house, 2nd cottage and garage, looking southwest from Surrey Drive.

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Photo 6. Detail of 1938 USGS aerial survey (arrows to main house and cottage added).